

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE Public Hearing April 1, 2015

Testimony submitted by

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SUPPORT HB 6187 AAC COURT PROCEEDINGS AND THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS

SUPPORT SB 1128 AAC THE USE OF ACCELERATED REHABILITATION IN THE CASE OF ANIMAL ABUSE

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am grateful that you are considering these critically important bills. Both bills make for an advance in government policy, not just for animals, but regarding violence toward people as well.

HB 6187 will provide appropriate representation for animals in animal cruelty prosecutions. This is so lacking and overdue.

SB 1128 will prevent the use of accelerated rehabilitation in animal cruelty cases. Currently the criminal records of those convicted may be erased. This bill will ensure that violence toward animals is taken seriously and results in appropriate penalties, and that records of convictions are maintained.

- Many studies find links between the abuse of animals and violence against people.
- Pet abuse is associated with domestic violence.
- Acts of animal cruelty are linked to other crimes, including violence against people, property crimes, and drug or disorderly conduct offenses.
- We must take animal abuse more seriously. A 2013 research report by the Office of Legislative Research (2013-R-0148) describes procedural outcomes of animal cruelty offenses from 2002 through 2012. Table 1 shows that 51% of offenses were nolleed, 33% were dismissed, 0.2% resulted in findings of not guilty, and only 16% resulted in guilty findings. Please bear in mind that few cases are brought to court, that many cases are resolved without court involvement.

These two bills will encourage animal cruelty cases to be taken with the seriousness they deserve.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Lewin